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CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF**

**REMARKS AT
MEXICAN NAVAL WAR COLLEGE**

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ADMIRAL MICHAEL MULLEN: Thank you for that introduction. And I feel very fortunate to be here today, and I think, as I understand it, we have approximately one hour. So what I'd like to do is make a few comments and then really open it up to questions. This is my fourth visit to Mexico over the last, I guess the first one was 1995 and then, really, third visit since 2003-2004. Previous visits were really in my capacity in my Navy and long before I had any idea that I'd be serving in the current capacity.

So it's great to be back. And it is really – the main focus of this visit is to try to connect with the leadership – the military leadership. And I was with General Galvan earlier today and will see Admiral Saynez right after this presentation. And more than anything else on these visits, to understand what the challenges are – what the mutual challenges are – where we can share an understanding of those challenges, where our common interests are and then to figure out a way, cooperatively, to move forward.

Certainly, not just my background, but my jobs, as is this one, are very focused on the military aspect of my country, as well as establishing and strengthening the military-to-military relationships. So I hope that, in the question and answer period, that you will ask questions that, in fact, broaden my understanding of what the challenges are, and certainly my understanding of what your views are with respect to where we are and how we should proceed.

I will apologize in advance for the fact that I am – in my own country these days, I am not spending much time on my Navy. That's – I'm spending most of my time focused on our ground forces, focused on Special Forces, focused on information, intelligence, surveillance, and focused on our people – and I'll talk a little bit about that in a minute. But I want to emphasize – strongly emphasize – how important this relationship is. This is, for this week, this is the fifth country since I left last Sunday.

You may know, I started in Brazil, went to Chile and Colombia – I'm sorry, Peru, Colombia – and came here yesterday. I have been, for some time now, and will continue to be, a proponent of focusing on Latin America, focusing on the relationships, focusing on the strengths and on the challenges. And I believe we live at a time where none of us can do this alone. These challenges continue to grow. And unless they're addressed collectively, they will not be – in many ways, they won't be defeated.

So I recognize the value of both understanding each other and working together, and that's really my main reason for being here. I'm encouraged – greatly encouraged – since we had talks between our joint staffs as recently as last week. And that represents a significant movement forward in this relationship at a time where we've got, I think, some common challenges that we need to meet.

In sort of three broad categories, what I spend an awful lot of my time on are, clearly, the Middle East – broader Middle East – our challenges in Pakistan and Afghanistan, our challenge in Iraq, which is being reduced, and in the terrorist world that's fomented by countries like Iran and organizations like Hezbollah. And we've learned a lot about how to fight those networks. We've learned a lot about how to address the specific capabilities and counter the specific capabilities in the extremist, violent terrorist world.

And it also has great – I believe it has relevance to the drug issue, the cartel issue, the narco-trafficking, the intersection of the crime world and the terrorist world, where it occurs, we've also learned a great deal how to counter it – how to defeat it, in particular, in the last two to three years. And I'm hopeful that we are able to share some of that information – share that information and share what we've learned with you – as we work more closely together.

So that's where I spend an awful lot of my time. Secondly, because our force has worked so – in particular, our ground forces – have deployed so much – I mean, our Army has been on – when I visit my Army bases, people we get now averaging three to four deployments since 2002. Those deployments are six months, 12 months, 15 months at a time – not very much time, with about the same amount of time home, before they deploy again – much more than we had anticipated. So my ground forces are both stressed and also resilient. And it's not just the forces; it's the families that are also very stressed right now. And the impacts of that have been significant.

So it's a very delicate balance right now with where we are and what we see as the needs over the next couple of years, where our Marine Corps is getting bigger and our Army is getting bigger, our Navy and our Air Force are actually getting smaller. And equally important in all this has been the deployment rate of our Special Forces. We're growing our Special Forces. That is a hugely important part of our military and it's growing in importance.

And we've also – many of them have – actually, most of them have been on multiple deployments – and by multiple, they're shorter deployments, but some of them are nine, 10, 11, 12 deployments to give you an example of how much time they've been gone. And they've brought great capability in this terrorism fight and I think they have an awful lot to offer – the kind of networking that exists with, specifically in the narco-trafficking world as well, and I can talk about that if you'd like.

So the first priority, sort of, again, is obviously, focus on the Middle East. The second priority is the health of my force. And then the third priority has been focused on the other regions of the world and risks that we have in other regions of the world. And I believe there's – and I've had, probably, 80 – notionally – 80 percent of my forces focused on the Central

Command for those two wars. So another 20 percent available to do – that focus on other parts of the world. It's just where we are right now.

And, that said, we have worked very hard to focus on Latin America, to focus on the relationships and actually we've had some significant successes there in support of and in cooperation with many countries including, I believe, Mexico.

And as I come here, I can't tell you how pleased I am with the advancement of the relationship. I know what it was in the mid-'90s; I know what it was even a few years ago. And I think because of the leadership in Mexico that has opened these doors for – and the ability – not the ability, but also the strong desire on the part of leadership in America, the American military, to, with open doors, to connect. I'm really encouraged by the change in the engagement and the exchanges between our militaries, which I think are vital.

I know there are some of you from other agencies. I would only talk to my own experience in my own government that I see so much more interaction between my military and the Department of Defense and the other agencies in the United States than just from a few years ago. And it's agencies that – it certainly includes the State Department, but it's agencies like Commerce and Agriculture and Treasury that are – and Justice – where we are much more integrated than we used to be.

And I think that's just a function of the requirements that we have right now to share information, to exchange information, to understand each other in our own government better than we have in the past. So the focus on Mexico, in particular, and clearly the focus on Latin America more broadly is a very high priority. I think reflective of that, specifically with Mexico, is the Merida initiative, which we all know is very important. I think it's important that we – with an initiative like Merida that we set expectations well. It's a lot of money; I understand that.

That said, my own system can be pretty bureaucratic and sometimes it can take longer than we want to deliver. Where I see us on Merida right now is at a time where we're getting started, getting the pump primed and, particularly for such a significant increase in assistance, it's going to take longer than any of us are satisfied with to really get this going and have it start delivering products.

I am comfortable and confident it will. In some ways, I ask your patience; in other ways, I don't want patience. But we have a system that we have to go through to support these kinds of initiatives as well. It's going to take us a little while. But I think once we get it going, it will be a very effective initiative.

But I think that is indicative of both the change and focus in priorities with respect to the challenges that we have. Obviously, the focus – or a great deal of focus right now – is ongoing between our countries with respect to the border and drug cartels and the inherent danger that's there for both our countries. And I, from my perspective, we have shared responsibilities for the cause and shared responsibilities for the solution. So how we work those shared responsibilities,

I think, are very important and I recognize that. And it is an enormously serious problem that has great implications.

There are characteristics of it that we have developed capabilities to fight in our military over the last several years that have direct application. And I think they can assist greatly. And through cooperative efforts, we have to figure out what's the best way to do that. And I talked to General Galvan about that earlier. I'm sure in my meetings this afternoon we'll be discussing the same kind of thing. And we're anxious to do that, I assure you.

You are not just a neighbor. And that is very important. But you are a great friend and we share a rich heritage. And that heritage will become richer, I think, in the future, for our children and our grandchildren. And I really believe it's us, the leaders now, that are responsible to make sure that that heritage continues to be robust and continues to provide for the safety and security of those young ones who come up behind us that we care so much about.

So, in many ways, it's a very dangerous time. And I understand that, particularly in certain areas. And I recognize that, but it's also – we're very capable countries. We're very capable partners in many ways. It's not a threat that we can't beat. It's not a threat we can't defeat. We can working together defeat it.

So, again, I want to say how much I appreciate the leadership which has worked very, very much to improve this relationship. It's happened in all of the services and I – in this job – focus a great deal on all of the services. I don't get to focus on one service anymore. We work a lot in our military about understanding our other services, understanding what we call the joint world. And I think the joint world is just more and more important for the future. So how do we share those experiences? How do we share those understandings? How do we learn about other services and take the best capabilities from all of our services and effectively bring them together to meet the challenges that we have.

So, with that in mind, I'd be glad to open it up to questions.